

## State Vocational High School: Educational Investment for the Future in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone - West Nusa Tenggara

**H. Fathurrahman**

Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of NTB Province

E-mail: fatur271171@gmail.com

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### Abstract

This article examines the urgency of establishing a State Vocational Madrasah Aliyah (MAKN) in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK), West Nusa Tenggara, as a strategic investment in meeting the needs of education and skilled labor in the tourism sector and related industries. The Mandalika KEK, as a super-priority tourism destination, requires competent human resources to support economic growth while still fortifying the "moral-religious" spirit of the local community from the onslaught of various tourist cultures that come one after another. This article uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach, secondary data analysis, and interviews with relevant stakeholders, including local government officials, tourism industry players, and community leaders. The results of the analysis show that the establishment of MAKN with relevant vocational programs, such as hospitality, culinary arts, and tourism, will have a significant positive impact. MAKN is expected to improve the quality of local human resources, create jobs, and encourage the development of small and medium enterprises. In addition, MAKN is also likely to support sustainable development in the area. Support from the local government, the Ministry of Religion, and industry players is a crucial factor in realizing a quality and competitive MAKN. This article concludes that the establishment of MAKN is an important educational investment for the future of Mandalika, in line with the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025-2045, and recommends a policy of important collaboration between various parties to ensure the success of its implementation.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK), located in West Nusa Tenggara Province, has been designated as one of the super priority tourism destinations in Indonesia. This designation aims to develop tourism potential in the region and improve the local economy. The development of the Mandalika KEK requires the support of competent human resources, especially in the tourism, hospitality, and culinary sectors (Jawapos 2024). In this context, vocational education plays an important role in preparing skilled workers who are ready to meet the needs of the industry in the Mandalika KEK. The State Vocational Madrasah (MAKN) is expected to be a solution to provide quality vocational education that is relevant to the needs of the job market. Vocational education at the Madrasah Aliyah level aims to equip students with practical skills that can be directly applied in the world of work (Kusuma dkk. 2023).

The establishment of MAKN in Mandalika is also in line with the government's efforts to improve the quality of human resources in the tourism sector. The government realizes that sustainable tourism development requires a workforce that not only has theoretical knowledge, but also adequate practical skills. MAKN is expected to bridge the gap between industry needs and the availability of skilled workers in the region (Elwiyansyah, Fadli, dan Fitriawan 2021).

In addition, the establishment of MAKN is also expected to have a positive impact on the local community. With MAKN, the younger generation in Mandalika will have better access to quality vocational education. This is expected to increase their opportunities to get decent jobs and improve their standard of living. MAKN is also expected to encourage the development of small and medium enterprises in the region (Elwiyansyah, Fadli, dan Fitriawan 2021). Therefore, the establishment of State Vocational Madrasah Aliyah in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone is a strategic step in educational investment for the future of the region. With the existence of MAKN, it is hoped that quality human resources can be created, who are able to support economic and tourism development in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone, which is in accordance with the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025-2045 (Undang-Undang RI 2024).

The development of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone as a world-class tourism destination also triggers the need for high service standards. In this case, MAKN can act as a center for competency development that produces graduates with skills according to international tourism industry standards. Thus, the quality of tourism services in Mandalika can be improved, which will ultimately increase the competitiveness of the region at the global level (Renjati dkk. 2019). In addition, the establishment of MAKN is also part of the government's efforts to equalize access to quality education. By prioritizing the Mandalika Special Economic Zone area, the government shows its commitment to ensuring that people in developing areas have equal opportunities to obtain education that is relevant to industry needs. This is in line with the principle of inclusive development which is one of the government's focuses (Indrawati dkk. 2023). The existence of MAKN in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone is also expected to be a catalyst for the development of the vocational education ecosystem in the West Nusa Tenggara region as a whole. With the successful vocational education model in Mandalika, it is hoped that similar initiatives will emerge in other areas in the province. This will strengthen the foundation of human resources in West Nusa Tenggara and support sustainable economic growth (Haidir 2022).

In the socio-cultural context, MAKN is also expected to be a forum for preserving and developing local culture. Vocational programs related to traditional arts, crafts, and culinary can

be integrated into the MAKN curriculum. This will ensure that the younger generation in Mandalika not only has technical skills, but also a deep understanding of their cultural heritage (Haidir 2022).

Finally, the establishment of MAKN in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone is a strategic step in preparing the younger generation to face challenges and opportunities in the era of globalization. With relevant skills and high competitiveness, MAKN graduates are expected to contribute significantly to economic and social development in Indonesia (Sudarmono 2021).

One of the main problems faced is the gap between the need for skilled workers in the tourism sector and related industries in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone and the availability of appropriate education graduates. Although the Mandalika Special Economic Zone has experienced rapid development, there is still a shortage of workers with the required practical skills. This can hamper the economic growth and competitiveness of the region (Renjati dkk. 2019).

Another problem that needs to be addressed is ensuring the relevance of the MAKN curriculum to the needs of the local industry. A curriculum that does not match the needs of the labor market can produce graduates who are not ready to work. Therefore, close cooperation is needed between MAKN and industry players in Mandalika to develop a relevant and up-to-date curriculum. In addition, government support is also needed regarding the 2025-2045 National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) (Undang-Undang RI 2024) and (Haidir 2022). In addition, the challenges in establishing MAKN also include the availability of facilities and quality teaching staff. Adequate facilities and competent teaching staff are essential to ensure the quality of vocational education provided. Therefore, significant investment is needed in infrastructure development and increasing the capacity of teaching staff at MAKN. In addition, the establishment of MAKN also requires support from various parties, including local governments, the Ministry of Religion, and industry players (Indrawati dkk. 2023).

The main problem formulation in this article is how the establishment of State Vocational High Schools (MAKN) in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK) can be a strategic solution to overcome the gap between the need for skilled workers in the tourism and industrial sectors related to the availability of appropriate education graduates, and how MAKN can contribute significantly to improving the quality of human resources, local economic development, and sustainable development in the region, in line with the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025-2045.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with literature study methods and secondary data analysis. Literature studies are conducted by collecting and analyzing various written sources, such as scientific journals, books, research reports, and official government documents, which are relevant to the research topic. Secondary data analysis is conducted by reviewing statistical data and information available from related institutions, such as the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Source: (Inclusive Economic Development in Indonesia: Opportunities and Challenges - ipdn Repository, eprints2.ipdn.ac.id) In addition, this study also involves interviews with relevant stakeholders to gain in-depth perspectives on the issues studied. Interviews were conducted with local government officials, tourism industry players, community leaders, and representatives from educational

institutions. These interviews aim to gather information about the need for skilled workers in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone, challenges in establishing MAKN, and the potential positive impacts of MAKN on local communities (Hadir 2022).

In data analysis, this study uses qualitative descriptive analysis techniques. This technique is used to describe and interpret research findings in depth. Data obtained from literature studies, secondary data analysis, and interviews are organized and categorized based on relevant themes. Furthermore, the data is analyzed to identify patterns, trends, and relationships between variables (Renjati dkk. 2019).

This study also pays attention to aspects of data validity and reliability. Data validity is ensured by using data triangulation, namely comparing and confirming findings from various sources and methods. Data reliability was ensured by using a structured interview protocol and recording data accurately and systematically (Hadir 2022).

Finally, this study uses a policy analysis approach to evaluate the policy implications related to the establishment of MAKN in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone. This approach involves analyzing policy documents, such as government regulations, regional development plans, and other strategic documents. This policy analysis aims to identify factors that influence policy implementation and provide recommendations for future policy improvements in accordance with the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025-2045 (Undang-Undang RI 2024).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis show that the establishment of MAKN in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone is a strategic step to address the gap between the need for skilled workers and the availability of appropriate education graduates. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that the tourism sector in West Nusa Tenggara, especially in Mandalika, has experienced rapid growth, with an increase in the number of tourists of 20% per year in the last five years. This growth has created a significant need for skilled workers in the hospitality, culinary, and tourism sectors (BPS Prov. NTB 2023).

Interviews with tourism industry players in Mandalika revealed that they had difficulty finding workers with the practical skills needed. They emphasized the importance of vocational education that is relevant to industry needs. This confirms the findings of a literature study which shows that vocational education has an important role in preparing a workforce that is ready to work.

Analysis of the existing curriculum in Islamic high schools in the region shows that there is still a gap between the curriculum taught and the needs of the industry in Mandalika. The existing curriculum tends to focus more on theoretical aspects than practical ones. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a curriculum that is more relevant to the needs of local industries. Source: (Analysis of Madrasah Aliyah Curriculum in West Nusa Tenggara) The results of the analysis also show that the establishment of MAKN can have a significant positive impact on the local community. With MAKN, the young generation in Mandalika will have better access to quality vocational education. This is expected to increase their opportunities to get decent jobs and improve their standard of living (Hadir 2022).

In addition, the establishment of MAKN is also expected to encourage the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the region. MAKN graduates who have skills in culinary,

crafts, and tourism can open their own businesses or work in local SMEs. This will create new jobs and improve the economy of the local community (Sudarmono 2021).

However, the establishment of MAKN also faces several challenges. One of the main challenges is the availability of facilities and quality teaching staff. Significant investment is needed in infrastructure development and increasing the capacity of teaching staff to ensure the quality of vocational education provided (Peraturan Presiden RI 2024).

Another challenge is ensuring the relevance of the MAKN curriculum to the needs of the ever-growing industry. Close cooperation is needed between MAKN and industry players to develop a curriculum that is adaptive and responsive to changing labor market needs (Haidir 2022).

The results of the policy analysis show that the establishment of MAKN is in line with the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025-2045, which emphasizes the importance of developing quality human resources. Therefore, strong support is needed from the central and regional governments to realize the successful establishment of MAKN (Undang-Undang RI 2024).

In the socio-cultural context, MAKN is also expected to be a forum for preserving and developing local culture. Vocational programs related to traditional arts, crafts, and culinary can be integrated into the curriculum MAKN. This will ensure that the young generation in Mandalika not only has technical skills, but also a deep understanding of their cultural heritage (Haidir 2022). Overall, the establishment of MAKN in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone is an important educational investment for the future of the region. With MAKN, it is hoped that quality human resources can be created, who are able to support economic and tourism development in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (Renjati dkk. 2019).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the description above, the author can conclude that: First, the establishment of the State Vocational High School (MAKN) in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK) is a strategic step in answering the need for skilled workers in the tourism sector and related industries. The Mandalika KEK, as a super priority tourism destination, requires competent human resources to support its economic growth. MAKN is expected to be a solution to provide quality vocational education that is relevant to the needs of the labor market.

Second, the results of the analysis show that the establishment of MAKN will have a significant positive impact on the local community. MAKN is expected to improve the quality of local human resources, create jobs, and encourage the development of small and medium enterprises. In addition, MAKN is also expected to support sustainable development in the area. Support from the local government, the Ministry of Religion, and industry players is a crucial factor in realizing a quality and competitive MAKN.

Third, overall, the establishment of MAKN in the Mandalika KEK is an important educational investment for the future of the region. With the existence of MAKN, it is hoped that it will create quality human resources, who are able to support economic and tourism development in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone, in line with the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025-2045.

The policy recommendation that can be proposed is the need to establish a strategic partnership between the State Vocational High School (MAKN) with the tourism industry and

related sectors in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK). This partnership can be realized through the development of a competency-based curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the industry, the provision of work practice facilities for students, and the involvement of industry practitioners as guest teachers. In addition, the government needs to provide full support in the form of providing infrastructure, increasing the capacity of teaching staff, and incentives for industries involved in the partnership program. Thus, MAKN can produce competent and work-ready graduates, and contribute significantly to local economic development and sustainable development in the Mandalika KEK, in line with the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025-2045.

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